

August 9, 2002

**Subject: C Docket No. 98-67: Ultratec CapTel**

Dear Sirs or Madams,

My name is Barbara Hyde, and I have had a progressive hearing loss since childhood, which became profound deafness in adolescence. Though embracing the Deaf Community as an adult, my roots and day-to-day business are in the hearing community wherein spoken communication is the norm, expectation, and comfort zone. There are a handful of voices I can understand over a 50 dB amplified telephone with success, however by and large I primarily rely on the TTY for telecommunications. That is, before the event of CapTel!

I have been fortunate to have access to the CapTel phone by Ultratec, and for the most part exclusively use the CapTel for all of my telephone calls. I'd like to explain why this new technology is so revolutionary for myself as well as for millions of other Deaf or Hard of Hearing people in this country who desire to use their voices over the phone, but have been unable to conduct a "conventional" voice conversation due to significant hearing loss. **Plainly stated, the CapTel is the *only* telecommunication technology available today that allows a deaf person to pick up the phone, dial the number of the person they want to call, and converse voice-to-voice as if both parties were hearing.** It is simple, it is natural, and it is complete functional equivalence.

When using the TTY and traditional relay service, I have to call a toll-free number, provide an operator with the number of whom I wish to call, they make the call for me and explain to the party I am calling how to use the relay service, and *then* the "hello" begins. There is so much time-consuming set up, as well as public ignorance regarding the relay service. Despite a decade of statewide outreach by TRS providers to prepare the general public for a relay call, TTY users using relay are often mistaken for telemarketers and consequently their calls are abruptly disconnected. Voice Carry Over (VCO) allows me to use my voice and read what is being said, but involves the same lengthy and awkward set up as traditional TTY relay, including the military like "go ahead" ("over") to indicate it's the other persons turn to talk. In addition to the time it takes to use traditional relay, the quality leaves a lot to be desired. People speak at 150 words per minute, yet at best they type around 60 words per minute. When the relay operator is transcribing what a person is saying for the deaf caller, it is not verbatim and is often paraphrased or delayed by messages like "speaking too fast" which requires me to ask the other party to repeat, after they've finished their monologue and its my turn to talk of course!

The voice recognition software used by CapTel operators is significantly more accurate and efficient than the prevailing method of listening and typing the conversation. For the CapTel user, the conversation is natural. It is seamless. It is an opportunity for deaf and hard of hearing people to play on a level field among hearing people. The majority of people who are deaf or hard of hearing are those who once had hearing, and know what it is like to pick up a phone and make a call – a significant functional loss that CapTel can restore. This telephone will enhance the lives of the 28 million Americans with hearing loss and the countless millions more they wish to communicate with on the telephone. I ask that the FCC support this wonderful technology by arranging for CapTel to be reimbursed from the interstate TRS fund per Ultratec's request. Please make CapTel available for all Americans – the benefits are life changing and good for all.